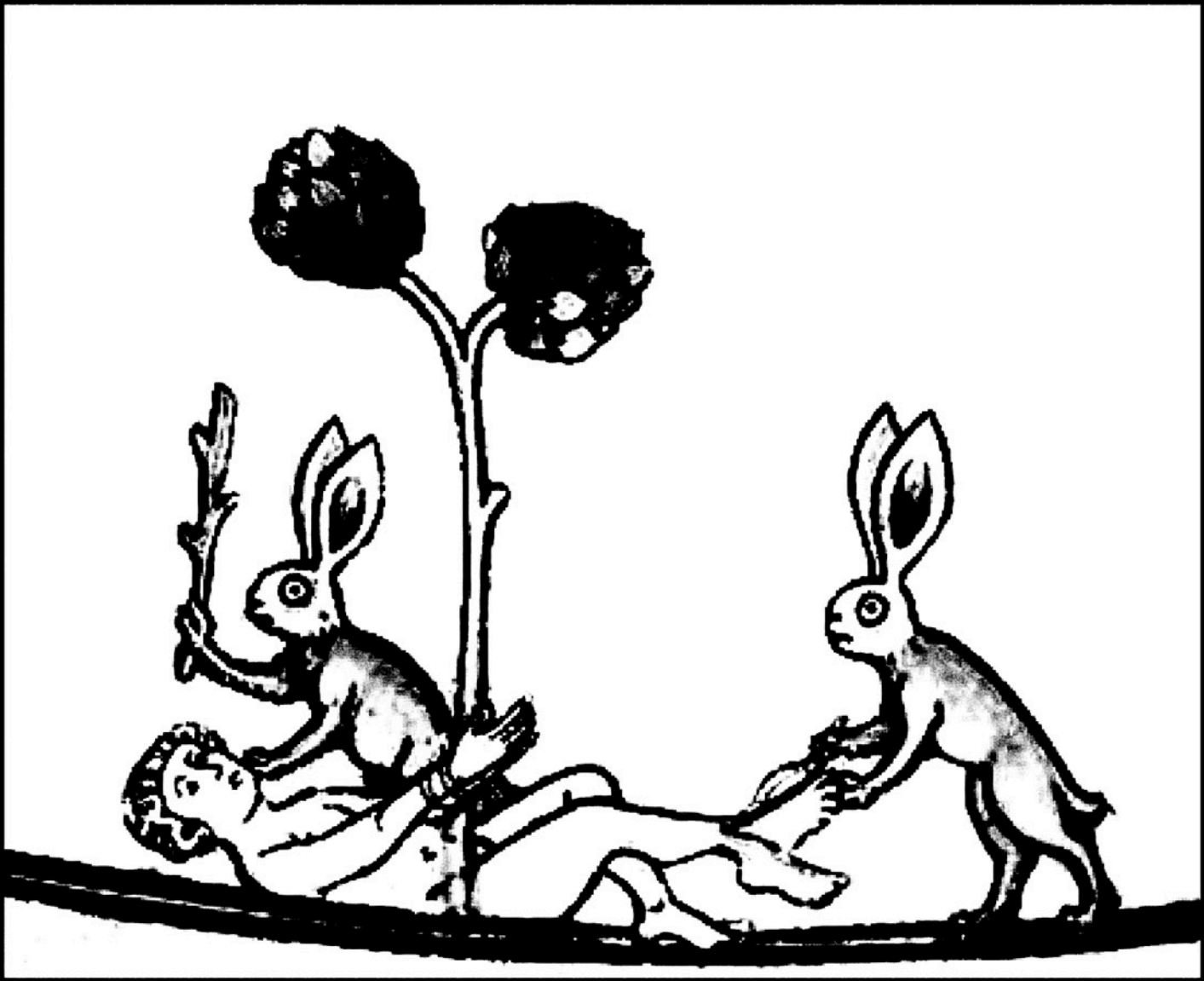


Ungual Misconceptions

SUM BUNNY
MMXXV

Ungual Misconceptions

A Rejection of the Podiatric Interpretation of Cunicular Marginalia

By Sum Bunny

2025

OPEN THROTTLE
CC BY 4.0

YOU ARE FREE

to share and adapt the material for any purpose,
even commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given.

Ungual Misconceptions

A Rejection of the Podiatric Interpretation
of Cunicular Marginalia

By Sum Bunny

Abstract Recent revisionist interpretations of high-Gothic marginalia have posited a startling hypothesis: that the violent leporids depicted in 14th-century illuminated manuscripts are not engaged in ritualistic slaughter, but are instead administering aggressive aesthetic foot care. This paper, titled the "Anti-Pedicure Manifesto," serves as a rigorous rebuttal to this "Spa Theory." Through a close visual analysis of the *Smithfield Decretals*, we demonstrate that the instruments wielded by these lagomorphs are weapons of war, not tools of exfoliation. We contend that the "pedicure reading" fails to meet even the most generous standards of iconographic plausibility, relying instead on a projection of modern wellness culture onto medieval apocalyptic anxiety.

I. Introduction: The Danger of Anachronistic Wellness

The field of medieval manuscript studies is frequently besieged by modern projection, yet few theories are as pernicious as the suggestion that the murderous rabbits of the *drôlerie* tradition are merely misunderstood cosmetologists. Proponents of this view argue that the rabbit situated at the foot of the human figure is performing a rudimentary pedicure, while the rabbit atop the chest provides percussive deep-tissue massage.

Such a reading is intellectually reckless. It ignores the fundamental theological function of the *monde renversé* ("world turned upside down") motif. The medieval viewer would not have seen a spa day; they would have seen the terrified realization of a world where the prey hunts the predator. To interpret this scene as a "forceful pedicure" is to strip the image of its essential satiric bite.

II. Visual Analysis: Cudgels, Not Cuticle Pushers

Let us examine the primary evidence presented in the manuscript plate.

A. The "Masseur" on the Chest The rabbit perched upon the victim's sternum holds a wooden implement. Revisionists identify this as a "reflexology wand." This is patently absurd. The object is a *baculum*—a cudgel. The grip is aggressive, the arm is raised in a striking motion, and the posture is one of martial dominance. There is no evidence of the rhythmic, soothing motion required for massage; the intent is clearly blunt force trauma.

B. The "Pedicurist" at the Feet The second rabbit, positioned at the subject's feet, is the linchpin of the Pedicure Hypothesis. Admittedly, the rabbit is manipulating the foot. However, the implement in its paws lacks the porous texture of a pumice stone. It appears to be a binding cord or a small blade intended for the *severing of the Achilles tendon*. Furthermore, the rabbit's gaze is not fixed on the toenails with the concentration of an aesthetician; it stares blankly, perhaps sadistically, into the middle distance—a hallmark of the *cuniculus homicida* (killer rabbit) archetype.

C. Category Error and the Wellness Fallacy The persistence of this misinterpretation stems from a methodological failure we term **Anachronistic Somatic Projection**. This occurs when the contemporary viewer, conditioned by a culture of self-care, imposes a therapeutic narrative onto a pre-modern image of corporal punishment.

The medieval mind did not categorize "someone holding your foot" as an act of service; in the context of a *monde renversé*, it is an act of immobilization. To read the rabbit's grip as "exfoliating" rather than "restraining" is a category error. It mistakes the somatic intimacy of violence for the somatic intimacy of care.

III. The Physiognomy of Terror

If this were indeed a pedicure, one would expect the human subject to exhibit signs of leisure. Instead, the figure displays the classic rictus of medieval distress. His hands are raised in surrender, not comfort. His eyes are wide. He is not enjoying a "spa package"; he is realizing that the natural order has collapsed and he is about to be executed by creatures he likely ate for dinner the previous Tuesday. To mistake his terror for the sensitivity of a ticklish foot is a gross misreading of 14th-century emotional coding.

IV. Contextualizing the Violence

The rabbit in medieval marginalia is a symbol of cowardice. When the illuminator depicts a rabbit wielding a club, the humor is derived from the *impossibility* of the violence. It is a satire of human frailty (knights fleeing from bunnies).

If we accept the Pedicure Hypothesis, we must accept that the medieval mind feared aggressive grooming as much as death. While hygiene standards in the Middle Ages were different from our own, there is no historical record of "roaming gangs of aesthetician rabbits" terrorizing the countryside. The violence is literal, not metaphorical exfoliation.

V. Conclusion

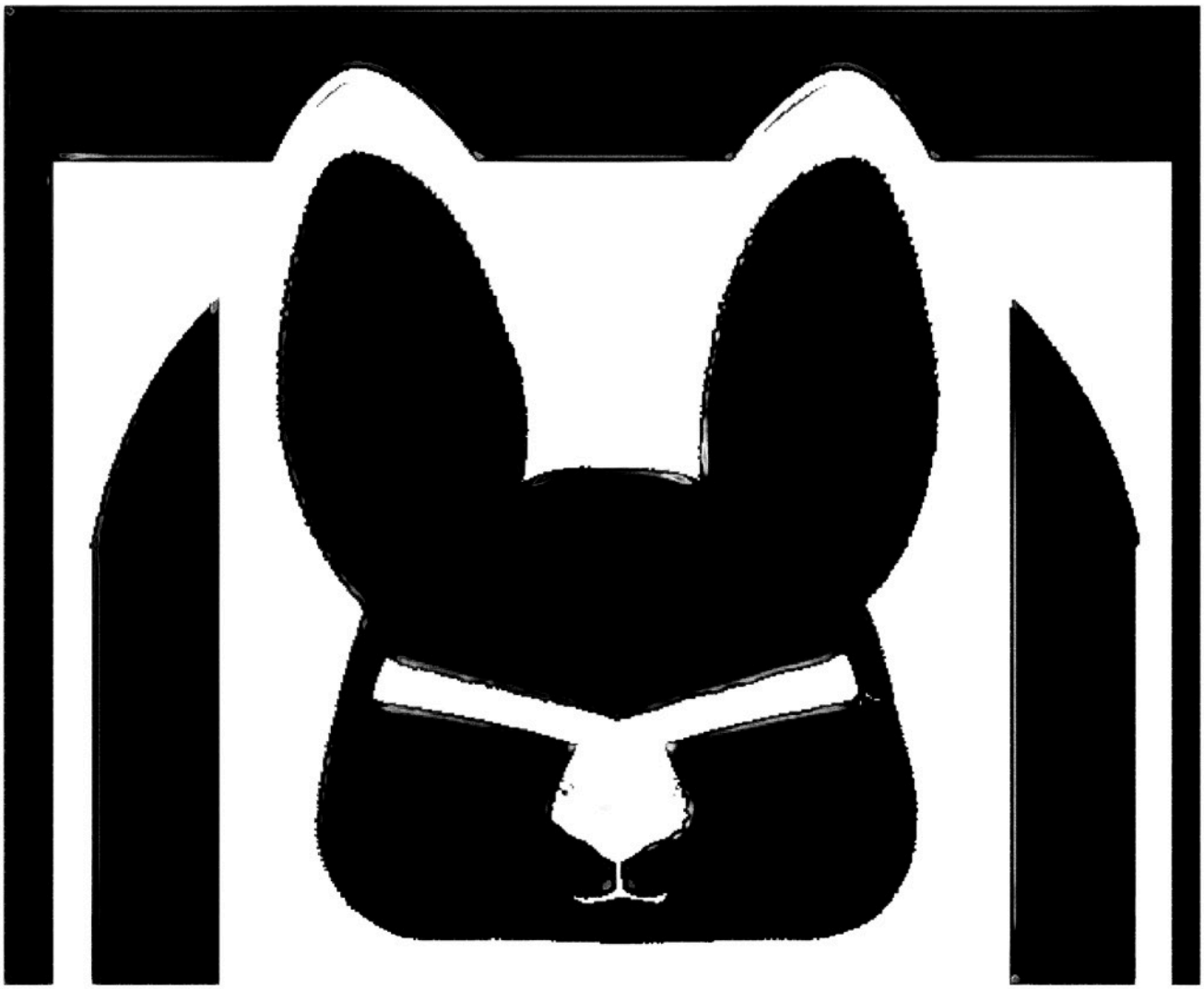
The attempt to rebrand the violent rabbits of the *Smithfield Decretals* as over-enthusiastic pedicurists is a failure of historical empathy. It imposes a 21st-century wellness lens onto a 14th-century nightmarescape. These rabbits are not here to buff, file, or moisturize. They are here to conquer. We must respect the intent of the medieval artist: this man is not getting a pedicure; he is getting owned.

First edition published via the Internet Archive.
Part of the Sum Bunny Canon (Ark Hive Press, 2025).

This was written through a collaboration between a human author and AI systems acting as analytical tools. The machines provided structure; the human provided judgment. Nothing appears here that the author did not personally create, refine, choose, and claim.

Acknowledgement:

HEY JOSIANE, THANK-YOU FOR BEING YOU.
(I'M GONNA TRY AND REMEMBER TO MAKE MY SIDE MARGINS A LITTLE BIGGER SO IT'S EASIER TO READ THESE THINGS ON CELL PHONES.)
SUM BUNNY LOVES YOU!!!



FREE FLASH